THE TREE OF LIFE

PROLOGUE

1. *With Christ I am nailed to the cross*,[1]
from Galatians, chapter two.

The true worshiper of God and disciple of Christ,
who desires to conform perfectly
to the Savior of all men
crucified for him,
should, above all, strive
with an earnest endeavor of soul
to carry about continuously,
both in his soul and in his flesh,
the cross of Christ
until he can truly feel in himself
what the Apostle said above.
Moreover an affection and feeling of this kind
is merited to be experienced in a vital way only by one
who, not unmindful of the Lord's passion nor ungrateful,
contemplates
the labor, suffering and love
of Jesus crucified,
with such vividness of memory, such sharpness of intellect
and such charity of will
that he can truly say with the bride:
A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me;
he will linger
between my breasts.[2]

2. To enkindle in us this affection, to shape this understanding and to imprint this memory, I have endeavored to gather this bundle of myrrh from the forest of the holy Gospel,

1. Gal. 2:19.
2. Cant. 1:12.

which treats at length the life, passion and glorification of Jesus Christ. I have bound it together with a few ordered and parallel words to aid the memory. I have used simple, familiar and unsophisticated terms to avoid idle curiosity, to cultivate devotion and to foster the piety of faith. Since imagination aids understanding, I have arranged in the form of an imaginary tree the few items I have collected from among many, and have ordered and disposed them in such a way that in the first or lower branches the Savior's origin and life are described; in the middle, his passion; and in the top, his glorification. In the first group of branches there are four stanzas placed opposite each other in alphabetical order.[3] So also in the second and third group of branches. From each of these branches hangs a single fruit. So there are, as it were, twelve branches bearing twelve fruits according to the mystery of the tree of life.[4]

3. Picture in your mind a tree whose roots are watered by an ever-flowing fountain that becomes a great and living river with four channels to water the garden of the entire Church. From the trunk of this tree, imagine that there are growing twelve branches that are adorned with leaves, flowers and fruit. Imagine that the leaves are a most effective medicine to prevent and cure every kind of sickness, because the word of the cross *is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes* (Rom. 1:16). Let the flowers be beautiful with the radiance of every color and perfumed with the sweetness of every fragrance, awakening and attracting the anxious hearts of men of desire. Imagine that there are twelve fruits, *having every delight and the sweetness of every taste* (Wisd. 16:20). This fruit is offered to God's servants to be tasted so that when they eat it, they may always be satisfied, yet never

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3. Bonaventure implies that the original manuscript contained a picture of a tree. On this was inscribed a poem, which is discussed in note 5, p. 121; cf. the Quaracchi critical edition, *S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, VIII, xxxix.

4. This and the following passage are based on Apocalypse 22:1-2: *And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as a crystal, coming forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the city street, on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit according to each month, and the leaves for the healing of nations.* Cf. Esther 10:6; Gen. 2:9-10.

grow weary of its taste. This is the fruit that took its origin from the Virgin's womb and reached its savory maturity on the tree of the cross under the midday heat of the Eternal Sun, that is, the love of Christ. In the garden of the heavenly paradise—God's table—this fruit is served to those who desire it. This is suggested by the first stanza, which says:

> O cross, salvation-bearing tree,
> Watered by a living fountain,
> Your flower is spice-scented,
> Your fruit an object of desire.[5]

4. Although this fruit is one and undivided, it nourishes devout souls with varied consolations in view of its varied states, excellence, powers and works. These can be reduced to twelve. This fruit of the tree of life, therefore, is pictured and is offered to our taste under twelve flavors on twelve branches. On the first branch the soul devoted to Christ perceives the flavor of sweetness, by recalling the distinguished origin and sweet birth of her Savior; on the second branch, the humble mode of life which he condescended to adopt; on the third, the loftiness of his perfect power; on the fourth, the plenitude of his most abundant piety; on the fifth, the confidence which he had in the trial of his passion; on the sixth, the patience which he exhibited in bearing great insults and injuries; on the seventh, the constancy which he maintained in the torture and suffering of his rough and bitter cross; on the eighth, the victory which he achieved in the conflict and passage of death; on the ninth, the novelty of his resurrection embellished with remarkable gifts; on the tenth, the sublimity of his ascension, pouring forth spiritual charisms; on the eleventh, the equity of the future judgment; on the twelfth, the eternity of the divine kingdom.

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5. This and the two stanzas below, in no. 6, are part of a longer poem which Bonaventure mentions in no. 2; cf. note 3, p. 120. This longer poem, which probably had fifteen stanzas, was changed and added to by later copyists. The editors of the critical edition print within the text only the three stanzas here, but add a number of others in a supplement: cf. the critical edition, *S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, VIII, 86-87.

5. I call these fruits because they delight with their rich sweetness and strengthen with their nourishment the soul who meditates on them and diligently considers each one, abhoring the example of unfaithful Adam who preferred *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* (Gen. 2:17) to the tree of life. No one can avoid this error unless he prefers faith to reason, devotion to investigation, simplicity to curiosity and finally the sacred cross of Christ to all carnal feeling or wisdom of the flesh. Through the cross the charity of the Holy Spirit is nourished in devout hearts and the sevenfold grace is poured forth, as is requested in the two first and last verses.

6. Let us, then, say with devotion and tears:

Feed us with these fruits,
Shed light upon our thoughts,
Lead us along straight paths,
Crush the attacks of the enemy.
Fill us with your sacred light,
Breathe holy inspiration,
Be a peaceful way of life
For those who fear Christ. Amen.[6]

6. Cf. note 5, p. 121.

ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS PASSION

FIFTH FRUIT: HIS CONFIDENCE IN TRIALS

Jesus Sold through Guile

Jesus Prostrate in Prayer

Jesus Surrounded by the Mob

Jesus Bound with Chains

SIXTH FRUIT: HIS PATIENCE IN MALTREATMENT

Jesus Denied by His Own

Jesus Blindfolded

Jesus Handed Over to Pilate

Jesus Condemned to Death

SEVENTH FRUIT: HIS CONSTANCY UNDER TORTURE

Jesus Scorned by All

Jesus Nailed to the Cross

Jesus Linked with Thieves

Jesus Given Gall to Drink

EIGHTH FRUIT: VICTORY IN THE CONFLICT OF DEATH

Jesus, Sun Dimmed in Death

Jesus Pierced with a Lance

Jesus Dripping with Blood

Jesus Laid in the Tomb

ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS GLORIFICATION

NINTH FRUIT: THE NOVELTY OF HIS RESURRECTION

Jesus Triumphant in Death

Jesus Rising in Blessedness

Jesus, Extraordinary Beauty

Jesus Given Dominion over the Earth

TENTH FRUIT: THE SUBLIMITY OF HIS ASCENSION

Jesus, Leader of His Army

Jesus Lifted Up to Heaven

Jesus, Giver of the Spirit

Jesus Freeing from Guilt

ELEVENTH FRUIT: THE EQUITY OF HIS JUDGMENT

Jesus, Truthful Witness

Jesus, Wrathful Judge

Jesus, Glorious Conqueror

Jesus, Adorned Spouse

TWELFTH FRUIT: THE ETERNITY OF HIS KINGDOM

Jesus, King, Son of the King

Jesus, Inscribed Book

Jesus, Fountain-Ray of Light

Jesus, Desired End

Arise, then, O soul devoted to Christ, and examine diligently, consider attentively and mull over carefully each of the things that are said about Jesus.

ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS ORIGIN

FIRST FRUIT: HIS DISTINGUISHED ORIGIN

Jesus Begotten of God

1. When you hear that Jesus is begotten of God, beware lest some inadequate thought of the flesh appear before your mind's eye. Rather, with the vision of the dove and the eagle, believe simply and contemplate with penetrating gaze the following: From that Eternal Light which is at the same time measureless and most simple, most brilliant and most hidden, there emerges a coeternal, coequal and consubstantial splendor, who is the power and wisdom of the Father. In him the Father ordered all things from eternity; through him *he made the world* (Heb. 1:2) and governs and directs it to his own glory, partly by nature, partly by grace, partly by justice and partly by mercy, so that he leaves nothing in this world without order.

Jesus Prefigured

2. At the beginning of the creation of nature, our first parents were placed in paradise; but they were driven out by the severity of God's decree because they ate of the forbidden tree. From that time his heavenly mercy has not ceased calling straying man back to the way of penance by giving hope of forgiveness and by promising that a Savior would come. Lest such condescension on God's part should fail to effect our salvation because of ignorance and ingratitude, he never ceased announcing, promising and prefiguring the coming of his Son in the five

ages of history, through the patriarchs, judges, priests, kings and prophets, from Abel the Just to John the Baptist. Through many thousands of years, by many marvelous prophecies he stirred men's minds to faith and inflamed their hearts with living desires.

Jesus Sent from Heaven[1]

3. Finally, the *fulness of time* (Gal. 4:4) had come. Just as man was formed from the earth on the sixth day by the power and wisdom of the divine hand, so at the beginning of the sixth age, the Archangel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin. When she gave her consent to him, the Holy Spirit came upon her like a divine fire inflaming her soul and sanctifying her flesh in perfect purity. But the *power of the Most High overshadowed* her (Luke 1:35) so that she could endure such fire. By the action of that power, instantly his body was formed, his soul created, and at once both were united to the divinity in the Person of the Son, so that the same Person was God and man, with the properties of each nature maintained.

Oh, if you could feel in some way
the quality and intensity of that fire sent from heaven,
the refreshing coolness that accompanied it,
the consolation it imparted;
if you could realize the great exhaltation of the Virgin Mother,
the ennobling of the human race,
the condescension of the divine majesty;
if you could hear the Virgin singing with joy;
if you could go with your Lady
into the mountainous region;
if you could see the sweet embrace
of the Virgin and the woman who had been sterile
and hear the greeting

1. Cf. Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-38.

in which the tiny servant recognized his Lord,
the herald his Judge
and the voice his Word,
then I am sure
you would sing in sweet tones
with the Blessed Virgin
that sacred hymn:
My soul magnifies the Lord . . .;[2]
and with the tiny prophet
you would exalt, rejoice and adore
the marvelous virginal conception!

Jesus Born of Mary[3]

4. Under the reign of Caesar Augustus, the *quiet silence* (Wisd. 18:14) of universal peace had brought such calm to an age which had previously been sorely distressed that through his decree a census of the whole world could be taken. Under the guidance of divine providence, it happened that Joseph, the Virgin's husband, took to the town of Bethlehem the young girl of royal descent who was pregnant. When nine months had passed since his conception, the King of Peace *like a bridegroom from his bridal chamber* (cf. 1 Par. 22:9; Ps. 18:6), came forth from the virginal womb. He was brought forth into the light without any corruption just as he was conceived without any stain of lust. Although he was great and rich, he became small and poor for us. He chose to be born away from a home in a stable, to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, to be nourished by virginal milk and to lie in a manger between an ox and an ass. Then "there shone upon us a day of new redemption, restoration of the past and eternal happiness. Then throughout the whole world the heavens became honey-sweet."[4]

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2. Luke 1:46.
3. Cf. Luke 2:1-18.
4. *Breviarium Romanum*, Officium nativitatis Domini, noc. 1, resp. 2.

Now, then, my soul,
embrace that divine manger;
press your lips upon and kiss the boy's feet.
Then in your mind
keep the shepherds' watch,
marvel at the assembling host of angels,
join in the heavenly melody,
singing with your voice and heart:
Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace
to men of good will.[5]

SECOND FRUIT: THE HUMILITY OF HIS MODE OF LIFE

Jesus Conformed to His Forefathers

5. On the eighth day the boy was circumcised and named Jesus (Luke 2:21). Thus not delaying to pour out for you the price of his blood, he showed that he was your true Savior, promised to his forefathers by word and sign, and like them in everything except ignorance and sin. For this reason he received the mark of circumcision so that coming and appearing *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, he might *condemn sin by sin* (Rom. 8:3) and become our salvation and eternal justice, taking his beginning from humility, which is the root and guardian of all virtues.

Why are you proud,
dust and ashes?[6]
The innocent Lamb
who takes away the sins of the world[7]
does not shrink from the wound of circumcision.

5. Luke 2:14.
6. Ecclus. 10:9.
7. John 1:29.

But you,
who are a sinner,
while you pretend to be just,
are fleeing
from the remedy of eternal salvation,
which you can never reach
unless you are willing to follow
the humble Savior.

Jesus Shown to the Magi[8]

6. When the Lord was born in Bethlehem of Judah, a star appeared to the Magi in the east and with its brightness showed them the way to the home of the humble King.

Do not now turn away
from the brilliance of that star in the east
which guides you.
Become a companion of the holy kings;
accept the testimony of the Jewish Scriptures
about Christ
and avert the evil
of the treacherous king.
With gold, frankincense and myrrh,
venerate Christ the King
as true God and man.
Together with the first fruits of the Gentiles to be called to faith,
adore, confess and praise
this humble God
lying in a manger.
And thus, warned in a dream
not to follow Herod's pride,

8. Cf. Matt. 2:1-12.

you will return to your country
in the footsteps
of the humble Christ.

Jesus Submissive to the Law[9]

7. It was not enough for the teacher of perfect humility, who was equal to the Father in all things, to submit himself to the humble Virgin. He must submit himself also to the Law, *that he might redeem those who were under the Law and free them from the slavery of corruption to the freedom of the glory of the sons of God* (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:21). He wished that his mother, although she was most pure, should observe the law of purification. And he wished that he himself, the redeemer of all men, should be redeemed as a firstborn son and should be presented to God in the temple and that an offering should be given for him in the presence of the just who were rejoicing.

Rejoice, then,
with that blessed old man and the aged Anna;
walk forth
to meet the mother and Child.
Let love overcome your bashfulness;
let affection dispel your fear.
Receive the Infant
in your arms
and say with the bride:
I took hold of him
and would not let him go.[10]
Dance with the holy old man
and sing with him:
Now dismiss your servant, Lord,
according to your word in peace.[11]

9. Cf. Luke 2:27.
10. Cant. 3:4.
11. Luke 2:29.

Jesus Exiled from His Kingdom[12]

8. It is fitting that perfect humility should be adorned and accompanied by three other virtues: poverty in fleeing from riches which are spurs to pride; patience in bearing insults with composure; obedience in following the bidding of others. So in God's design a higher providence allowed that, when the evil Herod sought to kill the tiny King, he was taken into Egypt as a pilgrim and pauper, directed by a warning from heaven. In the children his own age who were killed because of him, he was killed and, as it were, slaughtered in each. Finally, after Herod's death, he was brought back by divine command into the land of Judah; and growing in age and grace, he lived there with his parents and was subject to them. He never left them for a moment except when, at twelve years of age, he remained in Jerusalem, causing his mother much sorrow while she sought him and bringing her much joy when he was found.

Do not, then, leave the mother and Child
as they flee into Egypt
without accompanying them.
With the beloved mother looking for her beloved Son,
do not cease searching
until you have found him.
O, how you would weep
if with devotion
you could look upon so venerable a lady,
so charming a girl,
in a foreign country
with so tender and handsome a little boy;
or if you could hear the sweet complaint
of the loving mother of God:
Son, why have you done this to us?[13]
as if she would say:

12. Cf. Matt. 2:13-23.
13. Luke 2:48.

Most beloved Son,
how could you give such sorrow
to your Mother,
whom you love
and who loves you
so much?

THIRD FRUIT: THE LOFTINESS OF HIS POWER

Jesus, Heavenly Baptist[14]

9. When the Savior reached the age of thirty, wishing to work out our salvation, he began first to act before he taught (cf. Acts 1:1). And beginning with baptism as the doorway of the sacraments and the foundation of virtues, he wished to be baptized by John, in order to show us an example of perfect justice and to "confer regenerative power on water by contact with his most pure flesh."[15]

You also, accompany him faithfully;
and once regenerated in him,
explore his secrets so that
"on the banks of the Jordan
you may discern
the Father in the voice,
the Son in the flesh
and the Holy Spirit in the dove,
and when the heaven of the Trinity
is opened to you,"[16]
you will be taken up
into God.

14. Cf. Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22.
15. Bede, *In Lucam*, I, 3:21.
16. Pseudo-Anselm, *Meditationes*, 15.

Jesus Tempted by the Enemy[17]

10. *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil* (Matt. 4:1). By humbly enduring the enemy's attacks, he would make us humble; and by winning a victory, he would make us courageous. He firmly took up a life that was hard and solitary so that he might arouse the souls of the faithful to strive toward perfection and strengthen them to endure hardships.

Come now, disciple of Christ,
search into the secrets of solitude
with your loving teacher,
so that having become a companion of wild beasts,
you may become an imitator and sharer of
the hidden silence, the devout prayer, the daylong fasting
and the three encounters with the clever enemy.
And so you will learn
to have recourse to him
in every crisis of temptation
because *we do not have a high priest*
who cannot have compassion on our infirmities,
but one tried
in all things as we are,
except sin.[18]

Jesus Wonderful in His Miracles

11. *He is the one who alone does marvelous things* (Ps. 71:18). He transforms the elements, multiples the loaves of bread, walks upon the sea and calms the waves; he curbs the demons and puts them to flight; he cures the sick, cleanses the lepers and raises the dead; he restores sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, the power to walk to the crippled, sensation and movement to the paralytics and those with withered limbs.

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17. Cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.
18. Heb. 4:15.

To him our sinning conscience calls out
like the faithful leper:
Lord, if you wish,
you can make me clean.[19]
Now like the centurion:
Lord, my servant boy is lying at home
paralyzed and is suffering intensely.[20]
Now like the woman of Canaan:
Have mercy on me,
Son of David.[21]
Now like the woman with the issue of blood:
If I touch the hem of his garment,
I will be cured.[22]
Now with Mary and Martha:
See, Lord,
the one you love is ill.[23]

Jesus Transfigured[24]

12. To strengthen the human spirit with hope of eternal reward, *Jesus took Peter, James and John up a high mountain* by themselves (Matt. 17:1). He revealed to them the mystery of the Trinity and foretold that he would be rejected in his passion. He showed the glory of his future resurrection in his transfiguration. The Law and the prophets gave testimony to him in the apparition of Moses and Elijah, the Father and the Holy Spirit in the voice and the cloud.

So the soul devoted to Christ,
strengthened in truth and borne to the summit of virtue,

19. Luke 5:12; Matt. 8:2.
20. Matt. 8:6.
21. Matt. 15:22.
22. Matt. 9:21.
23. John 11:3.
24. Cf. Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-13; Luke 9:28-36.

can faithfully say with Peter:
Lord, it is good for us to be here,[25]
in the serene enjoyment of contemplating you.
When heavenly repose and ecstasy are given to the soul,
it will hear *the secret words*
which man is not permitted to speak.[26]

FOURTH FRUIT: THE PLENITUDE OF HIS PIETY

Jesus, the Solicitous Shepherd[27]

13. How great was this devoted shepherd's solicitous care for the lost sheep and how great his mercy, the Good Shepherd himself indicates with an affectionate metaphor in the parable of the shepherd and the hundredth sheep that was lost, sought with much care, and finally found and joyfully brought back on his shoulders. He openly declares the same thing in an express statement when he says: "*The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep*" (John 10:11). In him is truly fulfilled the prophecy: *Like a shepherd he will feed his flock* (Isa. 40:11). In order to do this, he endured toil, anxiety and lack of food; he traveled through towns and villages preaching the kingdom of God in the midst of many dangers and the plotting of the Pharisees; and he passed the nights in watchful prayer. Fearless of the murmuring and scandal of the Pharisees, he was affable to the publicans, saying that he had come into the world for the sake of those who are sick (Matt. 9:12). He also extended fatherly affection to the repentant, showing them the open bosom of divine mercy. As witnesses to this I call upon and summon Matthew, Zacchaeus, the sinful woman who prostrated herself at his feet and the woman taken in adultery.[28]

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25. Matt. 17:4.
26. 2 Cor. 12:4.
27. Cf. Luke 15:4-10; Matt. 18:12-14.
28. Matt. 9:9-13, 10:3; Luke 19:1-10, 7:36-50; John 8:3-11.

Like Matthew, therefore
follow this most devoted shepherd;
like Zacchaeus
receive him with hospitality;
like the sinful woman
anoint him with ointment
and wash his feet with your tears,
wipe them with your hair
and caress them with your kisses,
so that finally,
with the woman presented to him for judgment,
you may deserve to hear
the sentence of forgiveness:
Has no one condemned you? Neither will I condemn you.
Go, and sin no more.[29]

Jesus Bathed with Tears[30]

14. To manifest the sweetness of supreme devotedness, the Fountain of all mercy, the good Jesus, wept for us in our misery not only once but many times. First over Lazarus, then over the city and finally on the cross, a flood of tears streamed forth from those loving eyes for the expiation of all sins. The Savior wept abundantly, now deploring the misery of human weakness, now the darkness of a blind heart, now the depravity of obdurate malice.

O hard heart,
insane and impious,
to be pitied as if bereft of true life,
why do you rejoice and laugh
like a madman
in the midst of such misery
while the Wisdom of the Father

29. John 8:10-11.
30. Cf. John 11:35; Luke 19:41; Heb. 5:7.

weeps over you?
Consider your weeping physician and
make mourning as for an only son,
a bitter lamentation;
let tears stream down
like a torrent
day and night.
Give yourself no rest,
nor let the pupil of your eye be still.[31]

Jesus Acclaimed King of the World[32]

15. After the raising of Lazarus and the pouring of the jar of ointment on Jesus' head, as the fragrance of his fame had already spread among the people, foreseeing that a crowd would meet him, he mounted an ass in order to give a remarkable example of humility in the midst of the applause of the people who came to him, cut down branches and strewed their garments in his way. Not forgetting compassion, when the crowd was singing a hymn of praise, he lamented over the destruction of the city.

Rise now,
handmaid of the Savior, so that
like one of the daughters of Jerusalem
you may behold
King Solomon in the honor
which his mother the synagogue reverently offered him[33]
as a symbol
of the birth of the Church, so that
with works of piety and triumphs of virtue—
as if with olive branches and palms—
you may follow
the Lord of heaven and earth,
sitting on the back of an ass.

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31. Jer. 6:26; Lam. 2:18.
32. Cf. Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:12-16.
33. Cf. Cant. 3:11.

Jesus, Consecrated Bread[34]

16. Among all the memorable events of Christ's life, the most worthy of remembrance is that last banquet, the most sacred supper. Here not only the paschal lamb was presented to be eaten but also the immaculate Lamb, *who takes away the sins of the world* (John 1:29). Under the appearance of bread *having all delight and the pleasantness of every taste* (Wisd. 16:20), he was given as food. In this banquet the marvelous sweetness of Christ's goodness shone forth when he dined at the same table and on the same plates with those poor disciples and the traitor Judas. The marvelous example of his humility shone forth when, girt with a towel, the King of Glory diligently washed the feet of the fishermen and even of his betrayer. The marvelous richness of his generosity was manifest when he gave to those first priests, and as a consequence to the whole Church and the world, his most sacred body and his true blood as food and drink so that what was soon to be a sacrifice pleasing to God and the priceless price of our redemption would be our viaticum and sustenance. Finally the marvelous outpouring of his love shone forth when, *loving his own to the end* (John 13:1), he strengthened them in goodness with a gentle exhortation, especially forewarning Peter to be firm in faith and offering to John his breast as a pleasant and sacred place of rest.

O how marvelous are all these things,
how full of sweetness,
but only for that soul
who, having been called to so distinguished a banquet,
runs
with all the ardor of his spirit
so that he may cry out
with the Prophet:
As the stag longs for the springs of water
so my soul longs for you,
O God![35]

34. Cf. Matt. 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-38; John 13-17.
35. Ps. 41:2.

ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS PASSION

FIFTH FRUIT: HIS CONFIDENCE IN TRIALS

Jesus Sold through Guile[1]

17. The first thing that occurs to one who wishes to contemplate devoutly the passion of Jesus Christ is the perfidy of the traitor. So filled was he with the poison of deceit that he betrayed his Teacher and Lord; so on fire with the flame of greed that he sold the all-good God for money and weighed the most precious blood of Christ against the price of a cheap reward. So ungrateful was he that he pursued to death the one who had entrusted everything to him and had elevated him to the height of apostolic dignity. So hardened was he that he could not be called back from the evil he had conceived by the intimacy of the banquet, the humility of Christ's deference or the sweetness of his words.

O marvelous kindness
of the Master
toward this hardened disciple,
toward this wicked servant
of the loving Lord!
Certainly *it were better for that man*
if he had not been born.[2]
But although the traitor's impiety was inexplicable,
the most sweet meekness of the Lamb of God
surpassed it beyond measure.

1. Cf. Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6.
2. Matt. 26:24.

This meekness was given
as an example to mortal men, so that
when exasperated by a friend,
our human weakness would no longer say:
If my enemy had reviled me,
I could have borne it,[3]
because here was *a man, another self,*
who seemed to be a companion and friend,
who *ate the bread* of Christ
and at that sacred supper
partook sweet food with him—
he it was
who *raised his heel against him*![4]
And nevertheless in the very hour of his betrayal
this most mild Lamb did not refuse to apply
with a sweet kiss
his mouth *in which no guile was found*[5]
to the mouth which abounded in iniquity
in order to give the traitor every opportunity
to soften the obstinacy
of his perverse heart.

Jesus Prostrate in Prayer[6]

18. *Jesus, knowing all that was to come upon him* (John 18:4), in accord with the secret disposition of the Most High, *after reciting a hymn went forth to the Mount of Olives* (Matt. 26:30) to pray to his Father, as was his custom. And especially at that moment, when the combat of death was close at hand and the sheep which the devoted Shepherd had embraced with tender affection were about to be dispersed and left abandoned, the imagination of death was so horrible to Christ's sensible nature that he said:

3. Ps. 54:13.
4. Ps. 54:14-15; 40:10.
5. 1 Pet. 2:22.
6. Cf. Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46; John 18:1.

Father if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me (Matt. 26:39). The intensity of the anxiety in the Redeemer's spirit, springing from diverse causes, is testified to by the drops of bloody sweat that ran down to the ground from his entire body.

"Ruler, Lord Jesus,
whence comes to your soul
such vehement anxiety and such anxious supplication?
Have you not offered to the Father
an entirely willing sacrifice?"[7]
To shape us in faith
by believing that you have truly shared our mortal nature,
to lift us up in hope
when we must endure similar hardships,
to give us greater incentives to love you—
for these reasons you exhibited
the natural weakness of the flesh
by evident signs which teach us
that you have truly *borne our sorrows*[8]
and that it was not without experiencing pain
that you tasted the bitterness
of your passion.

Jesus Surrounded by the Mob[9]

19. How ready Jesus' spirit was to face his passion was clearly evidenced by the fact that when *men of blood* (Ps. 54:24) together with the betrayer came by night with torches, lanterns and weapons to seek his life, he spontaneously hurried to meet them, showed himself plainly and offered himself to them. That human presumption might know that it can do nothing against him unless he permit it, he cast these evil guards upon the ground with a word of his omnipotent power. But not even then

7. Pseudo-Anselm, *Meditationes*, 9.
8. Isa. 53:4.
9. Cf. Matt. 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-11.

did he *withhold his compassion in anger* (Ps. 76:10) nor did his honeycomb cease to drip the sweetness of kindness.[10] For he healed with the touch of his hand the ear of the impudent servant which had been cut off by his disciple, and he restrained the zeal of his defender who wanted to injure the attackers.

Cursed be their fury
because it is violent,[11]
for it could be curbed
neither by a miracle of his majesty
nor by a favor of his kindness.

Jesus Bound with Chains

20. Finally, who could hear without grief how the cruel executioners laid murderous hands upon the King of Glory and bound with chains the innocent hands of the gentle Jesus, as if he were a robber, and insultingly dragged as a victim to sacrifice that most meek Lamb who offered no objection? What a sting of grief then penetrated the hearts of his disciples when they saw their beloved Master and Lord betrayed by their fellow disciple and led to death, hands bound behind his back like an evildoer, and when that impious Judas, driven by remorse, afterwards was filled with such bitterness because of this that he preferred to die rather than live! (cf. Matt. 27:3-5).

Yet woe to that man
who did not return
to the fountain of mercy
out of hope of forgiveness
but, terrified
by the enormity of his crime,
despaired!

10. Cf. Cant. 4:11.
11. Gen. 49:7.

SIXTH FRUIT: HIS PATIENCE IN MALTREATMENT

Jesus Denied by His Own[12]

21. When the shepherd is seized, *the sheep are scattered* (Matt. 26:31). When the Master was captured, the disciples fled. Yet Peter, more faithful, *followed at a distance even to the courtyard of the high priest* (Matt. 26:58). There in response to a maidservant he denied with an oath that he knew Christ and repeated it a third time. Then after the cock crowed, his kind Master looked upon his beloved disciple with mercy and grace. Reminded by this of the earlier warning, Peter *went out and wept bitterly* (Matt. 26:75).

O whoever you are,
who at the word of an insistent servant,
that is your flesh,
by will or act
have shamelessly denied Christ,
who suffered for you,
remember the passion of your beloved Master
and go out with Peter
to weep most bitterly over yourself.
When the one
who looked upon the weeping Peter
looks upon you,
you will be inebriated with *the wormwood*[13]
of a twofold bitterness:
remorse for yourself
and compassion for Christ,
so that having atoned with Peter
for the guilt of your crime,
with Peter

12. Cf. Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:56-62; John 18:12-27.
13. Lam. 3:15.

you will be filled
with the spirit of holiness.

Jesus Blindfolded[14]

22. Presented to the council of the malicious high priests, our High Priest Jesus Christ professed the truth that he was the Son of God. He was condemned to death, as if for blasphemy, and endured innumerable insults. For that face, venerable to the elders and desirable to the angels, which fills all the heavens with joy, was defiled by the spittle of polluted lips, struck by impious and sacrilegious hands, and covered in derision with a veil. The Lord of all creation was struck on the ears like a contemptible slave, while he with placid respect and submissive speech gently reprimanded one of the servants of the high priest who had given him a blow: *If I have spoken ill*, he said, *bear witness to the evil; but if well, why do you strike me?* (John 18:23).

O truthful and kind Jesus,
what soul who is devoted to you,
when it sees and hears this,
can restrain itself from tears
and hide the sorrow
of its inner compassion?

Jesus Handed Over to Pilate[15]

23. O horrible impiety of the Jews,[16] which could not be satiated by such insults but went further and, raging with the madness of wild beasts, exposed the life of the Just One to an impious judge as if to be devoured by a mad dog! For the high priests led Jesus bound before the face of Pilate, demanding death by the torture of the cross for him who knew *nothing of sin* (2 Cor. 5:21). But he, like *a lamb before his shearer* (Isa. 53:7), stood

14. Cf. Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:66-71; John 18:13, 19-24.
15. Cf. Matt. 27:11-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:2-5; John 18:28-19:16.
16. An example of strong language against the Jews that was widespread in the Middle Ages. Such expressions would be contrary to contemporary norms as expressed, for example,

before his judge meek and silent, while deceitful and impious men, accusing him of a mass of false crimes, with tumultuous shouts sought to bring to death the Author of Life; and they saved the life of a man who was a murderer and seditious thief. With as much folly as impiety they preferred the wolf to the lamb, death to life, darkness to light.

Sweet Jesus,
who will be so hardened
as not to groan and cry out in spirit
when he hears with his bodily ear
or considers with his mind
those horrible shouts:
Away with him! Away with him!
Crucify him![17]

Jesus Condemned to Death[18]

24. Pilate was not ignorant of the fact that the Jewish people were aroused against Jesus not out of zeal for justice but out of envy. Although he clearly asserted that he found in him no cause at all for death, nevertheless, vanquished by human fear, he *filled* his soul *with bitterness* (Lam. 3:15) and handed over the most dutiful King to the judgment of a cruel tyrant, Herod. After Herod mocked Jesus and sent him back to Pilate, the latter issued an even crueler order that Jesus should stand stripped in the sight of men who mocked him so that savage scourgers could lash that virginal and pure-white flesh with fierce blows, cruelly inflicting bruise upon bruise, wound upon wound. The precious blood flowed down the sacred sides of that innocent and loving youth in whom there was found absolutely no basis for accusation.

And you, lost man,
the cause of all this confusion and sorrow,
how is it

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in the statement of Vatican II on the Jews in its *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.*

17. Cf. John 19:15.

18. Cf. Luke 23:8-25; Matt. 27:26-31; Mark 15:16-20; John 19:1-16.

that you do not break down and weep?
Behold, the most innocent Lamb
has chosen on your account
to be condemned by an unjust sentence
in order to rescue you
from a sentence of just damnation.
Behold, he *pays back* for you
what he *did not steal*.[19]
And you, my wicked and impious soul,
you do not repay him
with gratitude and devotion
nor do you recompense him
with compassion.

SEVENTH FRUIT: HIS CONSTANCY UNDER TORTURE

Jesus Scorned by All[20]

25. After Pilate had passed judgment to satisfy the desires of the wicked, those sacrilegious soldiers were not satisfied to crucify the Savior until they had heaped his soul full of mockery. The entire cohort assembled in the praetorium, stripped him of his clothes, dressed him in a scarlet tunic and placed a purple cloak around him, a crown of thorns on his head and a reed in his right hand. They genuflected in mockery, gave him blows, spat upon him and struck that sacred head with the reed.

Attend now,
O pride of the human heart
that flees from reproach and aspires after honors!
Who is it who comes
in the likeness of the King
and yet is filled with the confusion

19. Ps. 68:5.
20. Cf. references in note 17, p. 146.

of a despicable slave?
He is your King and your God,
who is accounted *as a leper and the last of men*[21]
in order to snatch you from eternal confusion
and to heal you from the disease of pride.
Woe, therefore, and woe again
to those who, after seeing this outstanding reflection
of humility,
are lifted on high
in pride
placing on display again the Son of God,[22]
who is all the more worthy of all honor from men
because of how much humiliation
he has endured for their sake.

Jesus Nailed to the Cross[23]

26. When the wicked men were sated with insulting the meekest King, our King was again clothed in his own garments, which would be stripped off a second time; and *bearing his cross for himself*, he was led forth *to the place of Calvary* (John 19:17). There he was stripped completely and covered only with a cheap loincloth. Thrown roughly upon the wood of the cross, spread out, pulled forward and stretched back and forth like a hide, he was pierced by pointed nails, fixed to the cross by his sacred hands and feet and most roughly torn with wounds. His garments were given away as spoils and were divided into parts, except his seamless tunic which was not divided but went by lot to one man.

See, now, my soul,
how he who is *God blessed above all things*,

21. Isa. 53:4, 3.
22. Heb. 6:6.
23. Cf. Matt. 27:33-37; Mark 15:22-26; Luke 23:33-34; John 19:17-24.

is totally submerged
in the waters of suffering
from *the sole of the foot to the top of the head.*[24]
In order that he might draw you out totally
from these sufferings,
the waters have come up to his soul.[25]
For crowned with thorns
he was ordered to bend his back
under the burden of the cross
and to bear his own ignominy.
Led to the place of execution,
he was stripped of his garments
so that he seemed to be a leper
from the bruises and cuts in his flesh
that were visible over his back and sides
from the blows of the scourges.
And then transfixed
with nails,
he appeared to you as your beloved
cut through with wound upon wound
in order to heal you.
Who will grant me
that my request should come about
and that God will give me
what I long for,[26]
that having been totally transpierced
in both mind and flesh,
I may be fixed
with my beloved
to the yoke of the cross?

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24. Rom 9:5; Isa. 1:6.
25. Ps. 68:2.
26. Job 6:8.

Jesus Linked with Thieves[27]

27. To increase the confusion, ignominy, shame and suffering, the innocent Lamb was lifted up on the cross as a spectacle, in the midst of thieves, outside the gate in the place of punishment for criminals on that solemn day at noon, while his friends wept and his enemies scoffed. For also *the passersby shook their heads* (Matt. 27:39), and those who were standing there were shouting, saying that *he saved others and* now *he cannot save himself* (Matt. 27:42). One thief did not refrain from this kind of mockery, while the most mild Lamb prayed out of the sweetness of his kindness to his Father for those who were crucifying him and deriding him; and to the thief who confessed and implored him, he promised paradise out of his most generous charity.

O words full of sweetness and forgiveness:
"Father, forgive them!"
O words full of love and grace:
"Today you will be with me
in paradise!"[28]
Breathe in peace now, O soul,
in hope of pardon,
however great a sinner you are,
if you do not shrink from following the footsteps
of the Lord God who is suffering for you,
"who in all his torments
did not once open his mouth
to say even the slightest word
of complaint or excuse or threat or abuse
against those accursed dogs.
Rather he poured upon his enemies
words of a new blessing
not heard since the beginning of the world."[29]

27. Cf. Matt. 27:38-44; Mark 15:27-32; Luke 23:35-43.
28. Luke 23:34, 43.
29. Pseudo-Anselm, *op. cit.*, 9; John 9:32.

Say, then, with much confidence:
"*Have pity on me, O God,*
have pity on me,
because my soul trusts in you."[30]
If only like the repentant thief
you would merit to hear
at the moment of death:
"*Today you will be with me*
in paradise."[31]

Jesus Given Gall to Drink[32]

28. *After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled said, "I thirst"* (John 19:28). According to the testimony of John, who was present, after Jesus was given a drink of vinegar and gall on a sponge, he said: "*It is consummated*" (John 19:30). It was as if in the taste of vinegar and gall his bitter passion reached its fulness and completion. For since it was by tasting the sweetness of the forbidden tree that the prevaricator Adam became the cause of all our perdition, it was appropriate and fitting that a remedy for our salvation should be found in the opposite direction. While the hostile arrows of piercing suffering were increasing in each of his limbs, and his spirit was drinking in their poison (cf. Job 6:4), it was fitting that his mouth and tongue—the vehicles of food and speech—should by no means be spared in order that this prophecy might be fulfilled in our physician: *He has filled me with bitterness; he has inebriated me with wormwood* (Lam. 3:15); and that the following prophecy might be fulfilled in his most sweet and loving mother: *He has made me desolate and wasted with sorrow all the day long* (Lam. 1:13).

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30. Ps. 56:2.
31. Luke 23:43.
32. Cf. Matt. 27:48; Mark 15:36; John 19:28-30.

What tongue can tell,
what intellect grasp
the heavy weight of your desolation,
blessed Virgin?
You were present at all these events,
standing close by and participating in them
in every way.
This blessed and most holy flesh—
which you so chastely conceived,
so sweetly nourished
and fed with your milk,
which you so often held on your lap,
and kissed with your lips—
you actually gazed upon
with your bodily eyes
now torn by the blows of the scourges,
now pierced by the points of the thorns,
now struck by the reed,
now beaten by hands and fists,
now pierced by nails and fixed to the wood of the cross,
and torn by its own weight as it hung there,
now mocked in every way,
finally made to drink gall and vinegar.
But with the eye of your mind
you saw that divine soul
filled with the gall of every form of bitterness,
now groaning in spirit,
now quaking with fear,
now wearied,
now in agony,
now in anxiety,
now in confusion,
now oppressed by sadness and sorrow
partly because of his most sensitive response
to bodily pain,

partly because of his most fervent zeal
for the divine honor taken away by sin,
partly because of his pity poured out upon wretched men,
partly because of his compassion for you,
his most sweet mother,
as the sword pierced the depths of your heart,
when with devoted eyes
he looked upon you standing before him
and spoke to you these loving words:
"*Woman, behold your son,*"[33]
in order to console in its trials your soul,
which he knew had been more deeply pierced
by a sword of compassion
than if you had suffered
in your own body.

EIGHTH FRUIT: VICTORY IN THE CONFLICT OF DEATH

Jesus, Sun Dimmed in Death[34]

29. Then when the innocent Lamb, who is the true Sun of justice, had hung upon the cross for the space of three hours, and when the visible sun, out of compassion for its Maker, had hidden the rays of its light, now that all things were consummated, at the ninth hour that Fountain of Life dried up. *With a loud cry and tears* (Heb. 5:7), Jesus, God and man, in order to manifest his feeling of pity and to declare the power of his divinity, commends his spirit to the hands of his Father and expires. Then *the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom and the earth quaked and the rocks were rent and the tombs were opened* (Matt. 27:51-52). Then the centurion recognized that he was truly God. Then those who had come to a spectacle to jeer *returned*,

33. John 19:26.
34. Cf. Matt. 27:50-53; Mark 15:37-39; Luke 23:44-47; John 19:30.

beating their breasts (Luke 23:48). Then he who is *fairer in beauty than the sons of men* (Ps. 44:3), with his eyes clouding and his cheeks turning pale, appeared ugly for the sons of men, having been made a holocaust with a most sweet fragrance in view of his Father's glory in order to *avert his anger* from us (Ps. 84:4).

O Lord, holy Father, *look down, then,*
from your sanctuary,
from your lofty habitation in the heavens;[35]
look, I say, *upon the face of your Anointed*;[36]
look upon this most holy Victim,
which our High Priest offers to you
for our sins
and *be placated over your people's wantonness.*[37]
And you also, redeemed man, consider
who he is, how great he is, and what kind of a person he is
who for you is hanging on the cross,
whose death brings the dead to life,
at whose passing away
heaven and earth mourn and hard rocks crack
as if out of natural compassion.
O human heart,
you are harder than any hardness of rocks,
if at the recollection of such great expiation
you are not struck with terror,
nor moved with compassion
nor shattered with compunction
nor softened with devoted love.

Jesus Pierced with a Lance[38]

30. Then, in order that the Church might be formed out of the side of Christ sleeping on the cross and that the words of

35. Deut. 26:15.
36. Ps. 83:10.
37. Exod. 32:12.
38. Cf. John 19:31-37.

Scripture might be fulfilled which say: *They will look upon him whom they have pierced* (John 19:37; Zach. 12:10), the divine plan permitted that one of the soldiers should pierce open his sacred side with a lance. While blood mixed with water flowed, the price of our salvation was poured forth, which gushing from the secret fountain of the heart gave power to the sacraments of the Church to confer the life of grace and to become for those already living in Christ a draught of *the fountain* of living *water springing up into eternal life* (John 4:14). Behold how the spear thrown by the perfidy of Saul, that is, of the reprobate Jewish people, through the divine mercy *fastened in the wall without making a wound* (1 Kings 19:10) and made *a cleft in the rock and a hollow place in the cliff* as an abode for doves (Cant. 2:14).

Rise, therefore, beloved of Christ,
be like the dove
that makes its nest in the heights in the mouth of a cleft.[39]
There,
like *a sparrow that finds a home*,[40]
do not cease to keep watch;
there,
like the turtledove,
hide the offsprings of your chaste love;
there
apply your mouth
to draw water from the Savior's fountains[41]
for this is *the river*
arising from the midst of paradise
which, *divided into four branches*[42]
and flowing into devout hearts,
waters and makes fertile
the whole earth.

39. Jer. 48:28.
40. Ps. 83:4.
41. Isa. 12:3.
42. Gen. 2:10.

Jesus Dripping with Blood

31. Christ the Lord was stained with his own blood, which flowed profusely: first from the bloody sweat, then from the lashes and the thorns, then from the nails and finally from the lance. So that with God there might *be plenteous redemption* (Ps. 129:7), he wore a priestly robe of red; his *apparel* was truly *red and his garments like those of the wine presser* (Isa. 63:2). As in the case of Joseph who was thrown into an ancient cistern, his tunic was *dipped in the blood of a goat* (Gen. 37:31)—that is, because of the *likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom. 8:3)—and was sent to the Father for his recognition and acceptance.

"Recognize, therefore, O most merciful Father,
the tunic
of your beloved son Joseph,
whom the envy of his brothers in the flesh
has devoured like *a wild beast*[43]
and has trampled upon his garment in rage,
befouling its beauty with the remains of blood,
for it has left in it
five lamentable gashes.
For this is indeed, O Lord,
the garment
which your innocent Son willingly gave over
into the hands of the Egyptian prostitute,
that is to the Synagogue,
choosing to be stripped of the mantle of his flesh
and to descend into the prison of death
rather than to seek temporal glory
by acquiescing
to the shouts of the adulterous mob."[44]
For *when joy was set before him*,

43. Gen. 37:33.
44. Pseudo-Anselm, *op. cit.*, 9; cf. Gen. 39:7ff.

he endured a cross, despising the shame.[45]
But you also, my most merciful Lady,
behold
that most sacred garment of your beloved Son,
artistically woven by the Holy Spirit
from your most chaste body;
and together with him
beg forgiveness
for us who take refuge in you
that we may be found worthy
to flee from the wrath to come.[46]

Jesus Laid in the Tomb[47]

32. Finally a noble man, Joseph of Arimathea, came and with the permission of Pilate and the assistance of Nicodemus took the body of Christ down from the cross, embalmed it with spices, wrapped it in a cloth and buried it with all reverence in a new tomb which had been cut out of the rock for him in a nearby garden. Then, after the Lord was buried and soldiers were assigned to guard the tomb, those devoted and holy women who had followed him when he was alive, in order to render him service out of their dutiful piety now that he was dead, bought spices to anoint Jesus' most sacred body. Among them Mary Magdalene was borne along by such a burning in her heart, moved by such sweetness of piety and drawn by such strong bonds of love that, forgetting her feminine weakness, she was held back from visiting the tomb by neither the darkness of night nor the cruelty of the persecutors. Rather, she stood outside and bathed the tomb with her tears. Although the disciples had fled, she did not go away. Ablaze with the fire of divine love, she burned with such a powerful desire and was wounded with such

45. Heb. 12:2.
46. Matt. 3:7.
47. Cf. Matt. 27:57-66, 28:1; Mark 15:42-47, 16:1-2; Luke 23:50-56, 24:1; John 19:38-42, 20:1.

an impatient love that nothing had any taste for her except to be able to weep and to utter in truth those words of the Prophet: *My tears were my food day and night, as they say to me day after day: "Where is your God?"* (Ps. 41:4).

O my God, good Jesus,
although I am in every way without merit and unworthy,
grant to me,
who did not merit to be present at these events
in the body,
that I may ponder them faithfully
in my mind
and experience toward you,
my God crucified and put to death for me,
that feeling of compassion
which your innocent mother and the penitent Magdalene
experienced
at the very hour of your passion.

ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS GLORIFICATION

NINTH FRUIT: THE NOVELTY OF HIS RESURRECTION

Jesus Triumphant in Death

33. Now that the combat of the passion was over, and the bloody dragon and raging lion thought that he had secured a victory by killing the Lamb, the power of the divinity began to shine forth in his soul as it descended into hell. By this power our strong *Lion of the tribe of Judah* (Apoc. 5:5), rising against the *strong man who was fully armed* (Luke 11:21), tore the prey away from him, broke down the gates of hell and bound the serpent. *Disarming the Principalities and Powers, he led them away boldly, displaying them openly in triumph in himself* (Col. 2:15). Then the *Leviathan was led about with a hook* (Job 40:25), his jaw pierced by Christ so that he who had no right over the Head which he had attacked, also lost what he had seemed to have over the body. Then the true Samson, as he died, laid prostrate an army of the enemy (cf. Judges 16:30). Then the Lamb without stain *by the blood of his Testament led forth the prisoners from the pit in which there was no water* (Zach. 9:11). Then the long-awaited brightness of a new light shone upon those *that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death* (Isa. 9:2).

Jesus Rising in Blessedness[1]

34. When the third day dawned of the Lord's sacred repose in the tomb, which in the cycle of the week is both the eighth and

1. Cf. Matt. 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:1-31, 21:1-25.

the first, Christ, *the power and wisdom of God* (1 Cor. 1:24), with the author of death lying prostrate, conquered even death itself and opened to us access to eternity, when he raised himself from the dead by his divine power in order *to make known to us the paths of life* (Ps. 15:11). Then *there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, with raiment like snow and his countenance like lightning* (Matt. 28:2-3). He appeared attractive to the devout and severe to the wicked; for he terrified the cruel soldiers and comforted the timid women, to whom the Lord himself first appeared after rising because their intense devotion so merited. Then he was seen by Peter, then by the disciples going to Emmaus, then by all the apostles, except Thomas. Later he presented himself to be touched by Thomas, who proclaimed his faith: *My Lord and my God* (John 20:28). And thus during forty days he appeared in many ways to his disciples, both eating and drinking with them; and he enlightened our faith with proofs and lifted up our hope with promises so as finally to enkindle our love with gifts from heaven.

Jesus, Extraordinary Beauty

35. This most beautiful *flower of the root of Jesse* (Isa. 11:1), which had blossomed in the incarnation and withered in the passion, thus blossomed again in the resurrection so as to become the beauty of all. For that most glorious body—subtle, agile and immortal—was clothed in glory so as to be truly more radiant than the sun, showing an example of the beauty destined for the risen human bodies. Concerning this the Savior himself said: "*Then the just will shine forth like the sun into the kingdom of their Father*" (Matt. 13:43), that is, in eternal beatitude. And if the just will shine forth like the sun, how great do you think is the radiance of the very Sun of justice himself? So great is it, I say, that it is *more beautiful than the sun and surpasses every constellation*

of the stars (Wisd. 7:29); compared to light, his beauty is deservedly judged to be preeminent.

Happy the eyes that have seen!
But you will be truly *happy*
if there will be remnants of your seed
to see[2]
both interiorly and exteriorly
that most desired splendor.

Jesus Given Dominion over the Earth

36. The Lord appeared to his disciples also in Galilee and declared that all power in heaven and earth had been given to him by the Father (cf. Matt. 28:16-20). In view of this he sent his disciples *into the whole world to preach the gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15), promising salvation to believers, threatening damnation to unbelievers. *The Lord worked with them and confirmed the preaching by the signs that followed* (Mark 16:20) so that in the power of the name of Jesus Christ they might have command over all creatures and all diseases. And thus it was to be manifest to the whole world that Jesus Christ, the Son of the mighty Father, *lives and reigns* like another Joseph and *a true Savior* not only in *the land of Egypt* (Gen. 41:45, 45:26) but also "*in every place where* the eternal King *has dominion* (Ps. 102:22). At the command of the God of heaven he has been led forth from the prison of death and the underworld. And shorn of the fleece of mortality, he exchanged the clothing of flesh for the glory of immortality. Like a true Moses drawn out of the waters of mortality, he undermined the power of Pharaoh."[3] So exalted is his honor *that in his name every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth* (Phil. 2:10).

2. Tob. 13:20.
3. Pseudo-Anselm, *Meditationes*, 9; cf. Exod. 2:5.

TENTH FRUIT: THE SUBLIMITY OF HIS ASCENSION

Jesus, Leader of His Army[4]

37. Forty days after the Lord's resurrection—and this fortieth day is not without mystical meaning—having eaten with his disciples, the benign Master climbed the Mount of Olives; and then *while they looked on, he lifted up his hands and was borne up into heaven* (Luke 24:50-51), and a cloud engulfed him (Acts 1:9) as he ascended, and he hid himself from the view of men. And so *ascending on high, he led captivity captive* (Ps. 67:19; cf. Mich. 2:13); and with the gates of heaven now open, he made a way for his followers and led the exiles into the kingdom. He made them fellow citizens with the angels and *members of God's household* (Eph. 2:19). Thus he repaired the fall of the angels, increased the honor of his eternal Father, manifested himself in triumph and proved that he is the Lord of Hosts.

Jesus Lifted Up to Heaven

38. While the angels sang and the saints rejoiced, the God and Lord of angels and men ascended *above the heaven of heavens* (Ps. 67:34), and he soared *on the wings of the wind* (Ps. 17:11) with the marvelous agility of his power and sat at the right hand of the Father, *having become so much superior to the angels as he inherited a more excellent name than they, and there he appeared before the face* of the most benign Father *to intercede for us* (Heb. 1:4, 9:24). *For it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners and become higher than the heavens* (Heb. 7:26), so that, seated at the right hand of Majesty, he might show to the glorious face of his Father the scars of the wounds which he suffered for us.

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4. Cf. Acts 1:9-11.

Let every tongue give thanks to you,
Lord our Father,
for the unutterable gift
of your most abundant charity.
You have not spared the only Son of your heart,
but you have handed him over
to death
for all of us
that we might have so great and so faithful
an advocate
before your face in heaven.[5]

Jesus, Giver of the Spirit

39. When seven weeks had passed since the resurrection, on the fiftieth day, *when the disciples were gathered in one place with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a violent wind blowing* (Acts 1:14, 2:1). The Spirit descended upon the group *of a hundred and twenty persons* (Acts 1:15) and *appeared in the form of tongues of fire* to give speech to the mouth, light to the intellect and ardor to the affection. *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages* (Acts 2:4), as the prompting of the Holy Spirit dictated, who taught them all truth and inflamed them with all love and strengthened them in every virtue. For aided by his grace, illumined by his teaching and strengthened by his power, although they were few and simple, "they planted the Church with their own blood"[6] throughout the world, partly by their fiery words, partly by their perfect example, partly by their astonishing miracles. Purified, illumined and perfected by the power of the same Holy Spirit, the Church became lovable to her Spouse and his attendants for being exceedingly beautiful and *adorned with* a wonderful *variety* (Ps. 44:15); but to Satan and

5. Pseudo-Anselm, *op cit.*, 9; Rom. 8:32; cf. 1 John 2:1.
6. *Breviarium Romanum*, Commune apostolorum, noc. 3, resp. 1.

his angels she became *awe-inspiring like an army in battle array* (Cant. 6:10).

Jesus Freeing from Guilt

40. In this holy Church, which through the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit is diversified in a variety of forms throughout the world and yet is united in a single whole, there presides one High Priest, Christ, as supreme Hierarch. With a wonderful order, like that of the heavenly city, he dispenses offices in the Church and distributes charismatic gifts. For *he himself gave some men as apostles, some as prophets, others again as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers in order to perfect saints and to build up the body of Christ* (Eph. 4:11-12). Also according to the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit, he gave the sacraments as seven remedies against sickness. Through the administration of the sacraments he grants sanctifying grace and forgives sins, which are never taken away except within the faith and unity of Holy Mother Church. And since sins are cleansed in the fire of tribulation, therefore, just as God exposed Christ, the head of the Church, to the waves of suffering, so he permitted his body, that is, the Church, to suffer tribulation in order to be tested and purified until the end of the world.

So the patriarchs, so the prophets, so the apostles,
so the martyrs, confessors and virgins
and as many as have been pleasing to God
have passed through many tribulations
and remained faithful
and so will all the chosen members of Christ
until the day of judgment.

ELEVENTH FRUIT: THE EQUITY OF HIS JUDGMENT

Jesus, Truthful Witness

41. At the time of the future judgment, when God will judge the secrets of hearts, *fire will precede the judge; angels will be sent with trumpets; the elect will be gathered together from the four winds* (Ps. 96:3; Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27); and all those who are in their tombs will rise by the power of the divine command and stand before his judgment seat (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7; Rom. 14:10).

Then *things hidden in darkness*
will be illumined;
then *the counsels of hearts*
will be revealed;[7]
then the books of consciences will be opened
and that book itself will be opened
which is called *the book of life*.[8]
Thus, altogether and in an instant,
all the secrets of all
will be revealed to all
with such clear certainty
that against the testimony of truth speaking in Christ
and of each conscience giving similar testimony,
not a single path will be open
for denial, or defense or excuse or subterfuge,
but each will receive *according to his deeds*.[9]
"There is, then, a great necessity
imposed upon us
to be good,

7. 1 Cor. 4:5.
8. Apoc. 20:12.
9. Ps. 61:13; Rom. 2:6; Apoc. 2:23.

since all our actions are within the view
of the all-seeing Judge."[10]

Jesus, Wrathful Judge[11]

42. When the sign of the omnipotent Son of God appears in the clouds and the powers *of heaven are shaken* (Matt. 24:29) and fire engulfs the earth in the conflagration of the world and all the just are placed on the right and the wicked on the left, then the Judge of the universe will appear so wrathful to the reprobate that *they will say to the mountains and to the rocks: "Fall upon us and hide us from the face of him who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb"* (Apoc. 6:16). *He shall don justice for a breastplate and shall wear sure judgment for a helmet. He shall take invincible equity as a shield and whet his dire anger for a spear, and the universe shall war with him against the foolhardy* (Wisd. 5:18-20); so that those who fought insolently against the Creator of all will then, by God's just judgment, be conquered by all creatures.

"On high
the wrathful Judge
will then appear;
below,
hell will open up
as a horrible chaos.
On the right
will be the accusing sins,
on the left
countless demons.
Thus surrounded,
where will the sinner flee?
Certainly, to hide will be impossible
and to be seen, intolerable.
For *if the just man scarcely will be saved,*

10. Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae*, V, prosa 6.
11. Cf. Matt. 24:29-31 Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28.

where will the impious and sinner appear?"[12]
Do not, therefore, enter into judgment
with your servant,
O Lord![13]

Jesus, Glorious Conqueror[14]

43. Having condemned the reprobate to be burned in eternal flames and having gathered together as in a bundle all the enemies of Jesus Christ, the almighty power of God will cast them, in the flesh and in the spirit, into the everlasting voracity of the flames in which they will never be consumed but will burn and suffer eternally. *And the smoke of their torments goes up forever and ever* (Apoc. 14:11). Then *the beast and the false prophet and those who accepted its image shall be cast into the pool of fire and brimstone which was prepared for the devil and his angels* (Apoc. 19:20; Matt. 25:41). Then the elect *will go out to see the corpses* (Isa. 66:24)—dead by the death not indeed of nature but of penalty. Then the *just will bathe their hands in the blood of sinners* (Ps. 57:11). Then at last the victorious Lamb *will make his enemies his footstool* (Ps. 109:1) while the wicked *will go into the depths of the earth and will be delivered over to the sword and will be the prey of foxes* (Ps. 62:10-11), that is, of the demons who had seduced them through deceit.

Jesus, Adorned Spouse

44. Finally, when the face of the earth has been renewed,
when *the light of the moon will be*
like the light of the sun
and the light of the sun will be seven times greater,
like the light of seven days,

12. Based on authentic Anselm, *Meditationes*, 1, and Pseudo-Bernard, *Tractatus de interiori domo*, c. 22, no. 46; 1 Pet. 4:18.
13. Ps. 142:1-2.
14. Cf. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43.

that holy city of Jerusalem,
which *had come down from heaven*
like a bride adorned
now *prepared for the marriage of the Lamb*,[15]
clothed with a double stole,[16]
will be led into the palace of the heavenly court
and introduced into
that sacred and secret bridal chamber
and will be united to that heavenly Lamb
in so intense a covenant
that bride and groom will become
one spirit.[17]
Then Christ will be clothed
with all the beauty of the elect
as if *with a many-colored tunic*[18]
in which he will shine forth richly adorned
as if covered with all manner of precious stones.
Then the sweet wedding song will resound
and throughout all the quarters of Jerusalem
Alleluia will be sung!
Then *the virgins who were prudent and ready*
will enter into the nuptials
with the Spouse,
and with the door closed,[19]
will abide
in the beauty of peace
in the tabernacle of confidence
and in opulent repose.[20]

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15. Isa. 30:26; Apoc. 21:10, 19:7.
16. Cf. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, VII, 7, no. 1; the double stole refers to the two rewards of paradise: the beatific vision and the glorification of the body.
17. 1 Cor. 6:17.
18. Gen. 37:3; cf. Ezech. 16:13.
19. Matt. 25:10.
20. Cf. Isa. 32:18.

TWELFTH FRUIT: THE ETERNITY OF HIS KINGDOM

Jesus, King, Son of the King

45. The glory and nobility of God's eternal kingdom have to be estimated from the dignity of its King, since a king is not derived from a kingdom but a kingdom from a king. And he indeed is King who has *on his garment and on his thigh a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords* (Apoc. 19:16), whose *power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away* (Dan. 7:14), whose kingdom will not be destroyed and whom *all tribes and peoples and tongues* (Apoc. 7:9) will serve throughout eternity. He is truly a *peaceable* (1 Par. 22:9) King, whose *countenance* both heaven and *all the earth desire to look upon* (3 Kings 10:24).

O how glorious is the kingdom
of this most excellent King
where all the just reign with him!
Its law is
truth, peace, charity, life, eternity.
It is not divided
by the number of those who reign;
nor lessened by being shared,
nor disturbed by its multitude,
nor disordered by its inequality of ranks,
nor circumscribed by space,
nor changed by motion,
nor measured by time.

Jesus, Inscribed Book

46. For the glory of the kingdom to be perfect, there is required not only exalted power but also resplendent wisdom so that the government of the kingdom is directed not by arbitrary decision but by the brilliant rays of the eternal laws emanating

without deception from the light of wisdom. And this wisdom is written in Christ Jesus as in the book of life, in which God the Father has *hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3). Therefore, the only-begotten Son of God, as the uncreated Word, is the book of wisdom and the light that is full of living eternal principles in the mind of the supreme Craftsman, as the inspired Word in the angelic intellects and the blessed, as the incarnate Word in rational minds united with the flesh. Thus throughout the entire kingdom *the manifold wisdom of God* (Eph. 3:10) shines forth from him and in him, as in a mirror containing the beauty of all forms and lights and as in a book in which all things are written according to the deep secrets of God.

O, if only I could find this book
whose origin is eternal,
whose essence is incorruptible,
whose knowledge is life,
whose script is indelible,
whose study is desirable
whose teaching is easy,
whose knowledge is sweet,
whose depth is inscrutable,
whose words are ineffable;
yet all are a single Word!
Truly, whoever finds this book
will *find life and will draw salvation from the Lord.*[21]

Jesus, Fountain-Ray of Light

47. In this eternal kingdom, *all good and perfect gifts come down* in plenty and abundance *from the Father of Lights* (James 1:17) through Jesus Christ, who is the superessential Ray and who, since he *is one, can do all things, and renews all things while*

21. Prov. 8:35.

perduring (Wisd. 7:27) himself. For he is *a pure effusion of the brightness of the power of the omnipotent God*, and therefore *nothing that is sullied can enter* (Wisd. 7:25) into this Fountain-Ray of light.

You soul devoted to God,
whoever you are,
run
with living desire
to this Fountain of life and light
and with the innermost power of your heart
cry out to him:
"O inaccessible beauty of the most high God
and the pure brightness of the eternal light,
life vivifying all life,
light illuming every light,
and keeping in perpetual splendor
a thousand times a thousand lights
brilliantly shining
before the throne of your Divinity
since the primeval dawn!
O eternal and inaccessible,
clear and sweet stream from the fountain
hidden from the eyes of all mortals,
whose depth is without bottom,
whose height is without limit,
whose breadth cannot be bounded,
whose purity cannot be disturbed."[22]
From this Fountain
flows the stream of *the oil of gladness*,[23]
which *gladdens the city of God*,[24]
and the powerful fiery torrent,

22. Pseudo-Anselm, *op. cit.*, 9.
23. Ps. 44:8.
24. Ps. 45:5.

the *torrent*, I say, *of the pleasure* of God,[25]
from which the guests at the heavenly banquet
drink to joyful inebriation
and sing without ceasing
hymns of jubilation.

Anoint us
with this sacred oil
and refresh
with the longed-for waters of this torrent
the thirsting throat of our parched hearts
so that *amid shouts of joy and thanksgiving*[26]
we may sing to you
a canticle of praise,
proving by experience that
with you
is the fountain of life,
and in your light
we will see
light.[27]

Jesus, Desired End

48. It is true that the end of all desires is happiness, which is "a perfect state with the presence of all goods."[28] No one reaches this state except by an ultimate union with him who is the fountain and origin of goods that are both natural and gratuitous, both bodily and spiritual, both temporal and eternal. And this is the one who said of himself: "*I am the Alpha and the*

25. Ps. 35:9.
26. Ps. 41:5.
27. Ps. 35:10.
28. Boethius, *op. cit.*, III, prosa 2.

Omega, the beginning and the end" (Apoc. 1:8). As all things are produced through the Word eternally spoken, so all things are restored, advanced and completed through the Word united to flesh. Therefore he is truly and properly called Jesus, *because there is no other name under heaven given to men by which* one *can obtain salvation* (Acts 4:12).

Believing, hoping and loving
with my *whole heart*, *with* my *whole mind*
and with my *whole strength*,[29]
may I be carried
to you, beloved Jesus,
as to the goal of all things,
because you alone are sufficient,
you alone are good and pleasing
to those who seek you and *love your name*.[30]
"For you, my good Jesus,
are the redeemer of the lost,
the savior of the redeemed,
the hope of exiles,
the strength of laborers,
the sweet solace of anguished spirits,
the crown and imperial dignity of the triumphant,
the unique reward and joy of all the citizens of heaven,
the renowned offspring of the supreme God
and the sublime fruit of the virginal womb,
the abundant fountain of all graces,
of whose fulness we have all received."[31]

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29. Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27.
30. Ps. 5:12.
31. Pseudo-Anselm, *op. cit.*, 9; John 1:16.

PRAYER

To Obtain the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

49. We, therefore, pray
to the most kind Father
through you, his only-begotten Son,
who for us became man, was crucified and glorified,
that he send us
out of his treasures
the Spirit of sevenfold grace
who rested upon you in all fulness:
the Spirit, I say, of WISDOM,
that we may taste the life-giving flavors
of the fruit of the tree of life,
which you truly are;
the gift also of UNDERSTANDING,
by which the intentions of our mind are illumined;
the gift of COUNSEL,
by which we may follow in your footsteps
on the right paths;
the gift of FORTITUDE,
by which we may be able to weaken the violence
of our enemies' attacks;
the gift of KNOWLEDGE,
by which we may be filled with the brilliant light
of your sacred teaching
to distinguish good and evil;
the gift of PIETY,
by which we may acquire a merciful heart;
the gift of FEAR,
by which we may draw away from all evil
and be set at peace
by submitting in awe to your eternal majesty.
For you have wished

that we ask for these things
in that sacred prayer which you have taught us;
and now we ask to obtain them,
through your cross,
for the praise of your most holy name.
To you,
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory,
thanksgiving, beauty and power,
forever and ever.
Amen.

HERE ENDS THE TREE OF LIFE